



HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION SERVICES

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Cool Tips to Avoid Heat-Related Illness

San Bernardino. The hot weather season is here and the best defense is prevention. The elderly, the very young, and people with chronic diseases and mental illness are at highest risk. Other conditions related to risk include obesity, fever, dehydration, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use. However, even young and healthy people can become ill if they are very physically active during hot weather.

"People suffer from heat-related illness because the body is not able to adjust and properly cool itself," says Margaret Beed, M.D., Health Officer with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. She suggests that to protect your health when temperatures are very high, remember to keep cool, and follow these tips:

- **Stay Cool Indoors** – Air conditioning is the number one way to protect against heat-related illness and death. If a home is not air-conditioned, people can reduce their risk by spending time in public facilities that are air-conditioned. Electric fans can give comfort but in the hottest weather, may not prevent illness. It helps to take a cool shower or bath, and to use the stove or oven less.
- **Drink Plenty of Fluids** – Increase fluid intake, do not wait until you are thirsty. During heavy exercise in the heat, drink two to four glasses of cool fluids each hour. Avoid alcohol, and sugary or very cold drinks. If you take water pills or must limit fluid intake, ask your doctor how much to drink in hot weather.
- **Replace Salt and Minerals** – A sports drink can replace the salt and minerals lost due to sweating during heavy exercise. Talk to a doctor first if on a low salt diet.
- **Wear Appropriate Clothing and Sunscreen** - Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes. Wear a wide-brimmed hat outdoors, and put on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, thirty minutes before going out. Reapply as the package directs.
- **Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully** – Limit activity to morning and evening hours, if possible. Try to rest often in shady areas.

- **Pace Yourself** – If you aren't used to working or exercising outdoors in the heat, start slowly. If activity makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, STOP what you're doing. Go to a cool area or into the shade and rest.
- **Monitor Those at High Risk** – Heat-related illness can cause someone to get confused or lose consciousness. Check on adults at risk at least twice a day, and closely watch them for signs of illness. More closely watch infants and young children too. People more likely to suffer from the heat include those 65 years of age and older, or anyone who is overweight, works or exercises outdoors, is physically ill with problems like heart disease or high blood pressure, poor circulation, depression, insomnia, or who take certain medicines.
- **Do Not Leave Children in Cars** – Never leave infants, children or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.

Keep cool and use common sense. For more information go to the website for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>, or the California Department of Public Health website at: <http://bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/EPO/>. Call the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health at (800) 782-6359, or visit the website at www.sbcounty.gov/dph.

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